

## Study gets green light Boards, region, police to share home?

Halton Region, its police service and both local school boards could all soon be calling the regional centre on Bronte Road home.

An opportunity study, facilitated by the region, Halton District School Board and Halton Catholic District School Board, has concluded that the regional centre in Oakville would be the perfect location for the school boards to move to, creating a one-stop shop for local residents.

"There were partnership opportunities out there that needed to be investigated," said Regional Treasurer and Commissioner of Corporate Services Jane MacCaskill in her presentation to the region's administration and finance committee Wednesday afternoon.

"(It's) a very good location for offering services throughout the region."

Consideration of the partnership came about as both school boards were investigating their future accommodation needs.

MacCaskill said the Catholic school board will need more administrative space by 2007, Halton Regional Police by 2008 and the district school board and the region by 2009.

"We saw this as a tremendous opportunity to look at what opportunities there might be to address those needs," she said.

The commissioner went on to present tentative layouts for the future regional centre that could either have all four services connected in one building or separate buildings on the same property.

Halton CAO Brent Marshall pointed out that having these services together will mean a savings in capital and operating costs.

The opportunity study identified that if the region, school boards and police were under the same roof, they could share facilities such as loading docks and meeting rooms and

potentially even share administrative and human resource services.

Chair Joyce Savoline voiced her enthusiasm for the venture.

"This is really exciting and innovative," she said. "It really could become a hub and a one-stop for a lot of government-type services."

She noted that this type of partnership could even attract other agencies that may want to be a part of the regional centre.

MacCaskill said 85 per cent of Halton residents would be able to access the services at the regional centre within a 20-minute drive.

"The Halton Regional Centre does offer an excellent central location," she said.

Members from both school boards were on hand at the committee meeting Wednesday, speaking in favour of sharing space at 1151 Bronte Rd.

"This looks to us as if it's an ideal opportunity," said Halton District School Board Chair Mary Chapin. "I would ask that you give it due consideration."

Halton Catholic District School Board Chair Al Bailey also said he thinks this is a worthwhile project.

The committee approved staff's recommendation that Halton put \$25,000 toward the preparation of service partnership business plans, the next step in investigating the facility-sharing proposal. A final decision will be made by regional council Wednesday.

Both school boards would also put in \$25,000 each to help cover the cost of preparing the plans with the help of consultants.

A report from MacCaskill and Marshall indicated that once the business plans have been developed, the province will be approached to determine its interest in participating and/or funding this type of partnership.

—By Melanie Hennessey, special

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